

# | ORANGE | is the new ~~BLACK~~ GAY

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# Abstract

This thesis attempts to answer the research question "How is queer female sexual identity represented in *Netflix' ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK?*" Theory about representation by Stuart Hall is used to construct a framework for this analysis, as well as theory about gender expression, queer representation and stereotypes. The concepts homovoyeurism, proxy character, (de)sexualization, the Other and heteronormativity are applied in a textual discourse analysis of six scenes in five episodes. Screenshots are used to analyze shot position and perspective regarding the portrayal of queer women. These findings, combined with an analysis of dialogue in the selected scenes, are used to answer two sub-questions: "How are queer women treated within the narrative of OITNB" and "How is queer female sexuality framed in OITNB?" Application of the concepts mentioned above results in a discussion about how discourse around queer women is shaped within the text of OITNB, and what ideas about queer women OITNB enforces. The scenes are analyzed individually, and a conclusion is drawn about the representation in that specific scene. In the end, these conclusions are combined to form one general conclusion about the representation in OITNB. The results of the analysis point out that queer women are often penalized for expressing their sexual identity. Within the narrative, engaging in queer female sex and/or relationships is almost always followed by negative experiences, sometimes unrelated to the character's sexual identity. To add to that, the queer female characters in these scenes in OITNB do not seem to live happy lives. This might be directly related to their incarceration, but for some characters, this incarceration is also a punishment for their sexuality. Queer female sexuality is treated as though it belongs in a separate society, quite literally "behind closed doors", making the prison into a 'proxy environment'. Generally, this analysis has found that the representation of queer female sexual identity in OITNB seems diverse at first, but actually contains a multitude of negative stereotypes and meanings about queer women.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Method.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Analysis.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>LESBIAN REQUEST DENIED (1x03) .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>BORA BORA BORA (1x10) .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A WHOLE OTHER HOLE (2x04) .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>YOU ALSO HAVE A PIZZA (2x06).....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>FINGER IN THE DYKE (3x04).....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1. Character introductions .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2. Transcriptions of analyzed scenes.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3. Screenshots used for analysis .....</b>	<b>36</b>

# Introduction

Unlike many of my peers, my introduction to binge-watching came long before Netflix, when 15-year-old me became obsessed with two female characters' relationship on GLEE. The introduction to "seeing myself on screen" caused me to go looking for more queer female representation on television.<sup>1</sup> The representation on GLEE, although flawed, made me feel validated, and less alone in my coming-out process.

Stuart Hall describes this effect as follows: "[...] representation is the way in which meaning is somehow given to the things which are depicted through the images or whatever it is, on screens [...]."<sup>2</sup> Hall goes on to define *signifying practices* as ways to give meaning to something. This practice is also referred to by Hall as *encoding*.<sup>3</sup> Television encodes its queer characters in a certain way. According to Hall, the notion of power is inseparable from the concept of representation: there is always someone who *encodes* and has the *power* to distribute this meaning to an audience, who *decode* the meaning.<sup>4</sup> Hall also emphasizes that when this meaning is constructed, the people that are represented feel a connection to the representation and become invested, because they can relate to the representation. This is what I experienced while watching GLEE. But, when the meaning is not (completely) constructed in a way in which people can identify with it, people are still invested, except now it is in the meaning that the representation is lacking.<sup>5</sup>

This "problem" also occurred during my adolescence. An increase in queer representation took place, yet it was not diverse. Only select "types" of queer people were represented, and I was unable to identify with these characters; most lesbians were feminine-presenting and almost none had short hair. They were lesbians, but they were still conventionally and heteronormatively attractive women. There are others who feel this way: People of color have commented on the whiteness of queer characters on television.<sup>6</sup> However, when Netflix Original Series ORANGE IS THE

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<sup>1</sup> In this text, I use the word "queer" to refer exclusively to LGB women; Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual women. Because I, myself, identify as a lesbian, I feel as though I can freely use the word "queer" in this analysis. However, I advise any readers who do not identify as LGBT+ and who are interested in this subject matter to refrain from doing so, for "queer" was originally used as a homophobic and transphobic slur in areas and times where non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people were still persecuted heavily by their peers and their governments. While I recognize that in most Western countries, the slur has been reclaimed, I still feel the need to point out that it is still being used as a slur in situations of violent homophobia or transphobia, by heterosexual and cisgender people around the world. I therefore feel that people who identify as the latter two should be careful when labeling things as "queer", because some LGBT+ people may not feel comfortable being assigned that word. I also criticize the naming of Queer Theory and Queer Studies as such, for the same reason.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Hall, "Representation and the Media", transcribed by Sut Jhally of the Media Education Foundation (University of Westminster, 1997): 6.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" in *Media and Cultural Studies* ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 166-167.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem;

Hall, "Representation," 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, 16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Jill Gutowitz, "The Overwhelming Whiteness of Queer Women on TV" on VICE's website, read October 15<sup>th</sup> 2018, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/ne49yk/the-overwhelming-whiteness-of-queer-women-on-teen-tv.](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/ne49yk/the-overwhelming-whiteness-of-queer-women-on-teen-tv.);

NEW BLACK (OINTB) came around, I was surprised to find the prison contained more queer and more diverse characters than I'd ever seen in one show.<sup>7</sup> There was some debate, however, about the quality of the diverse representation on the show.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, while most pop-culture articles discuss both quality and quantity of diversity (of gender identity, orientation and race) in representation on television, a large part of academic literature about LGBT representation focuses on white gay men. These two factors combined highlight a necessity to perform qualitative academic research on a diverse group of queer women.

OINTB seems apt as the corpus for such research because of its diverse ensemble of queer female characters. The research question therefore is as follows: "How is queer female sexual identity represented in ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK?"

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"LGBTQ+ Characters on TV Are Still Overwhelmingly White and Male" on ELLE's website, read October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, <https://www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/news/a47172/gay-lesbian-bisexual-television-characters-tropes/>.

<sup>7</sup> Netflix, *Orange Is the New Black*, created by Jenji Kohan. First aired in 2013.

<sup>8</sup> "How Orange Is The New Black Raised the Bar Behind Bars" on The Conversation, read October 15<sup>th</sup> 2018, <http://theconversation.com/how-orange-is-the-new-black-raised-the-bar-behind-bars-78702>;

Ashleigh Shackelford, "Orange Is The New Black is Trauma Porn Written for White People" on We Are Your Voice Magazine's website, read October 13<sup>th</sup> 2018, <https://wearyourvoicemag.com/more/entertainment/orange-is-the-new-black-trauma-porn-written-white-people>.

# Theoretical Framework

As explained in the introduction, the way representation is encoded, and the meaning that is conveyed through this, matters to the represented group of people.

Hall writes about this in his book *Representation*, where he bases his interpretation of the concept of representation in the cultural studies. He explains how language produces meaning through regulation and that this plays an essential part in understanding how (cultural) representation works. Much like in language, culture creates meaning through the construction of 'rules'.<sup>9</sup> For example, when filmmakers first started using the close up, it was used to properly convey emotions in a time when technology was not yet capable of accomplishing that from a greater distance. Ever since, close ups in film usually mean an emotional scene is happening. This illustrates how meaning is constructed through conventions: the first filmmaker to use this technique was not aware that he was setting a 'rule' for filmmakers to come, he was simply looking for a convenient way to accomplish his goal.

So, while the basics of our understanding of representation originate from the Cultural Studies perspective, it is important to note that this research will be at an intersection between Media Studies and Gender Studies. The former, because the way in which television operates within culture is essential to the way its representation is *constructed* and it should not be left out of the analysis. The second perspective is important, because the position of queer women in society, which is the *meaning* that is being constructed, has previously been analyzed from a Gender Studies perspective. Most of the texts that will be used to provide a framework for this particular analysis will therefore come from the same intersection between disciplines.

A good example of this intersection would be the role of women in fiction. Women on television are often used as entertainment for male viewers, but some female viewers find the portrayals of their gender to be inaccurate and unpleasant.<sup>10</sup> This occurs even more often with lesbians. Alexander Doty discusses how lesbian relationships on television are often hinted at and remain mostly in the *subtext*, the part of the text that is merely implied, but not spoken out loud or shown outright.<sup>11</sup> An example of this is the detective series RIZZOLI & ISLES. Main characters Jane Rizzoli and Maura Isles maintain a sexual tension throughout the series, and frequently express their mutual adoration and sexually charged comments. However, they both continue to date men, and don't end up together. These kinds of faux-lesbian relationships seem to be created for the humorous amusement of the audience, according to Doty.<sup>12</sup>

Using the insights of Hall, we can conclude that they are given the meaning of their sexual identity not being significant enough to be included in the narrative but amusing enough to be used as a joke for the heterosexual audience. Amber Raley and Jennifer Lucas have re-constructed

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE publications, 1997), 1-5.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross, "Women In/As Entertainment," in *Women in Media: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Doty, "I Love *Laverne* and *Shirley*: Lesbian Narratives, Queer Pleasures, and Television Sitcoms," in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 43-46.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

a scale to assess the quality of representation of homosexuality, divided into four categories: *non-representation, ridicule, regulation* and *respect*.<sup>13</sup>

Hall and Doty's discussion places representation in the category of ridicule, where queer characters are being made fun of within the narrative. In order to assess the overall quality of the representation in OITNB, it is crucial to use the four categories and answer the sub-question: "How are queer women treated within the narrative?"

This is where the concept of "homovoyeurism" is introduced. Homovoyeurism is a name for the phenomenon where series invite their heterosexual audience to momentarily step into the world of homosexuals. When this happens, it is often through a *proxy character* that directly represents the heterosexual part of the audience, infiltrating the homosexual world. The problem with homovoyeurism and the proxy is that the barrier between hetero- and homosexuality is kept firmly in place through the emphasis that the proxy is entering a different (Other) world.<sup>14</sup> Jenny Schecter in *THE L WORD* is an example of such a character. The tendency of producers to (accidentally) encourage homovoyeurism comes from their need to attract a big audience. This is particularly important for series that focus on queer characters such as *The L Word*, which could not survive as a niche series in the early 2000's. So, to avoid alienating the heterosexual audience, the queer characters are portrayed as the "Other." The concept of "the Other" was first used by Simone de Beauvoir to define the position of women within society (men as the default, and women as the other) but has been used to define other oppressive relationships within society.<sup>15</sup> In its essence, it means that marginalized groups are always presented in contrast to the default (dominant) group.

This contrasting relationship brings me to another tool producers use to keep heterosexual audiences interested; alternating queer and heterosexual sex scenes. In *The L Word*, this is done by letting the main character retell her experience of watching her lesbian neighbors have sex through a hole in the fence to her boyfriend, after which a heterosexual sex scene occurs.<sup>16</sup> This is also a good example of homovoyeurism: the audience is invited to look into the world of lesbians (Others) through the previously named proxy character Jenny, who takes the position of a literal voyeur. When queer female sex is shown, it often looks as though it is for the benefit of the male viewer, through the Male Gaze. The concept of the Male Gaze was originally introduced by Laura Harvey and states that when a heterosexual male character looks at a female character, the audience adapts his sexualized point of view, because the audience is placed in the active role of spectator, while the female character is a passive object. The Male Gaze is based on the unequal distribution of power between the man and the woman, which is adapted by the audience.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Amber B. Raley and Jennifer L. Lucas, "Stereotype or Success?" *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 2 (October 1, 2006), 20-25.

<sup>14</sup> Sheri L. Manuel, "Becoming the Homovoyeur: Consuming Homosexual Representation in *Queer As Folk*," *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 3 (September 2009): 277-280.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, "(the) Other" in *Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (London: SAGE Publications, 2004), 90-93.

<sup>16</sup> Candace Moore, "Getting Wet: The Heteroflexibility of Showtime's *The L Word*" in *Third Wave Feminism and Television: Jane Puts it in a Box*, ed. Merri Lisa Johnson (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 125-40.

<sup>17</sup> Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen*, nr. 16, 3. (1975).

Therefore, the second sub-question that will be answered is: "How is queer female sexuality framed in *OITNB*?"<sup>18</sup>

These representations of queer women originate from political points of view in society. As Hall says: it matters who has the power to encode the meaning. Jane Arthurs mentions that in order to be accepted into society, LGBT people have to fit into a certain "heteronormative" model of family and friendships. The encoders can enforce this idea by exclusively portraying relationships and people that fit into this model as "good people".<sup>19</sup> Both the concepts homovoyeurism and the Male Gaze carry this implication of power relations within their very definitions; in the Male Gaze, women are forced into a powerless position of objectification, while "Others" are portrayed in a specific way, lacking any character depth. Both Others and subjects of the Male Gaze are powerless in their relation to the viewer.

Ann Ciasullo discusses the ways in which lesbians are stereotypically portrayed. The two stereotypes she describes are the "sex-object" and the "dominant lesbian."<sup>20</sup> The sex-object queer woman is portrayed through the Male Gaze as both sexual and desexualized; she is sexually attractive to the male viewer, yet she does not have sex with other women in order to keep her non-threatening to the male viewer. The dominant queer woman is masculine and aggressive and poses a threat to both straight men and women. Usually, the dominant queer woman is used as a villain or as comic relief, presented as merely a caricature instead of a character with emotional depth.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the dominant and threatening queer woman is portrayed as the Other.

So, while *OITNB* seemed exceptionally diverse to me when I was first introduced to it, it will be interesting to discover how it portrays its queer women. I am unable to disclose precisely what the encoders of this particular series were trying to convey, but with the help of the theory and sub-questions above I hope to investigate how the Netflix Original *OITNB* uses the methods of construction of queer women described above.

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<sup>18</sup> By relations, in this particular instance, I mean both platonic and romantic relationships, as well as sexual encounters.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Arthurs, "Gay, Lesbian and Queer Sexualities in UK Drama" in *Television and Sexuality: Regulation and the Politics of Taste* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2004), 113-14.

<sup>20</sup> Ciasullo uses the word lesbian in her text, but her theory applies to queer women in general.

<sup>21</sup> Ann Ciasullo, "Making Her (In)Visible: Cultural Representations of Lesbianism and the Lesbian Body in the 1990's," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 3 (2001): 578.

# Method

"Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology [...] to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live."<sup>22</sup>

This quote is interesting when connected to Hall's message about the power dynamics of encoding a series. Cultures and subcultures making sense of their own identity and their place in this world can only be done through self-representation in their own art. Something different happens, however, when representation of a certain group is not created by that group. This makes the purpose of textual analysis to find out what message the encoder or producer/writer wants to distribute about a certain group of people. Because the goal of this research is to answer the question how queer female sexual identity is represented in OITNB, and thus, what message is being sent about queer women's identities, textual analysis is the appropriate method.

As mentioned in the introduction, representation is a signifying practice. Hall explains that, in order to understand the meaning of a representation, the interpreter has to speak the language in which the meaning is encoded. This metaphor is particularly important when analyzing representation. According to Hall, there are two main approaches; the *semiotics* approach, where the research focuses on "how" the representation and the meaning are constructed, and the *discursive* approach, which not only focuses on the "how" of representation, but also on the implications it has for the interpreters and larger culture in general, mainly in relation to power structures.<sup>23</sup>

This research is performed as a textual analysis, but the focus is on the discursive approach in order to interpret which meanings are being constructed about queer women and how these meanings display certain ideologies of power *within the text*. To do this, it is necessary to "understand the language", which in this case is the language of television, which consists of audiovisual material. Dialogue, body language, gender expression and physical interactions with other characters will be analyzed. Dialogue and physical interactions, as well as body language and gender expression will help determine how queer sexuality is framed in the series and in what position queer women are placed in within the narrative. I use a structural analysis to support the argument I make about the discursive implications the narrative carries, but the structural analysis does not construct the main argument, as this will come from the textual analysis of the text.

This analysis requires a certain degree of meticulousness on my part, because the interpretation of these signs is mostly dependent on personal experience with them. I therefore describe everything I analyze in extreme detail and do my best to explain how I come to the concluding interpretations. In these explanations, I refer to non-academic sources on the history of queer female identities in order to accurately interpret relationships and personal identities of the characters.

The sexual identities of the following characters are analyzed:

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<sup>22</sup> Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003): 1.

<sup>23</sup> Hall, *Representation*, 5.

- Carrie "Big Boo" Black
- Piper Chapman
- Nicky Nichols
- Poussey Washington
- Suzanne "Crazy Eyes" Warren

For each of these characters, one or two scenes that relate to their sexual identity are analyzed. The scenes are selected if the character discusses their sexual orientation out loud or engages in sexual behavior (seducing someone, having sex or talking about having sex). Because OITNB consists of six seasons which each count thirteen episodes and several of the main characters are romantically or sexually interested in women, the number of possible scenes to analyze is quite large.

Therefore, to limit the number of scenes to analyze, the character must have shown sexual or romantic interest in more than one other woman. This eliminates several characters from the analysis. This criterium is to avoid women who would normally identify as heterosexual in the analysis. This is necessary, because the research question and theory apply only to queer women.

Apart from this, the scene also has to either give insight in the position of the character in the narrative (and thus include some sort of storytelling element around the character's sexuality), or be a graphic representation of queer female sexuality. These criteria are necessary to properly answer the two sub-questions, which relate to the narrative and the framing of sexuality respectively.

The following scenes are analyzed:

- 1x03: LESBIAN REQUEST DENIED – Running Track Scene (Suzanne)
- 1x10: BORA BORA BORA – Opening Scene (Piper and Nicky)
- 2x04: A WHOLE OTHER HOLE – The Sex Competition (Nicky and Big Boo)
- 2x06: YOU ALSO HAVE A PIZZA – Poussey's first flashback (Poussey)
- 3x04: FINGER IN THE DYKE – Boo's night with Tracy in flashback (Big Boo)

Suzanne's scene has been chosen because her interest in Piper is essential in the narrative of that particular episode and generally the progression of the series. The scene in episode 1x10 - BORA BORA BORA is included because it involves a detailed discussion of Piper's sexual identity, including a narrative around her identity and a short, graphic sex scene between her and Alex. The sex competition between Nicky and Big Boo has been selected because in this scene, a large narrative is built around the sexuality of these two queer women, making it indicative of how queer sexuality is used in the series. Poussey's flashback includes both a narrative around queer sexuality, where she discusses a relationship with her partner, and a graphic sex scene between the two of them. Boo's flashback scene has been selected, again because of its narrative elements and the way her sexuality is framed. I realize that this brings the number of scenes in which Boo plays a central role up, but I feel this is justified, since she is one of the most outspoken queer characters and her sexuality plays an important role in most of her storylines within the general narrative of OITNB.

The flashback scenes have been included to accurately reflect possible differences or similarities between the ways queer sexuality is discussed and portrayed inside and outside of the prison, as well as take into account possible narrative implications. The scenes that are analyzed are mostly from the first three seasons, since this is when the characters are generally introduced. Later episodes have proven to be not as fruitful when it comes to queer characters defining or discussing their identities. The scenes that have been selected are the most reflective of how the series generally handles queer sexuality. I would have liked to perform a more extensive analysis, but this would have taken up too much time and resulted in an unspecific analysis rather than a scene-by-scene analysis.

For context while reading the analysis, I recommend using the appendices. Appendix 1 has character introductions and backgrounds, Appendix 2 has scene transcriptions and Appendix 3 contains numbered screenshots, which I refer to frequently.

# Analysis

## **LESBIAN REQUEST DENIED (1X03)**

### **Scene: Running track**

The scene starts with Piper Chapman, alone, running circles on the prison's running track. When she stops to catch her breath, she is approached by a black inmate with a strange look in her eyes. Suzanne Warren, also known as Crazy Eyes, was introduced in the previous episode when she came to Piper's aid when Piper was being starved by Red, the inmate who runs the kitchen. Since then, Suzanne has developed somewhat of an obsession with Piper, which shows in the conversation. From her comments of "Piper being a grown woman" and her not being able to "waste my time with these silly bitches" and "needing a real woman", we can gather that Suzanne has a romantic interest in Piper and desires to be with her. Suzanne herself is shown to be quite childish in her behavior throughout the show, and the other inmates treat her as such, often acting childish themselves in their interactions with Suzanne. Her comment refers to the way Piper has treated her so far; with more respect than we've seen other characters show towards her. Suzanne expresses her desire to be with someone who does not treat her like a child that needs to be taken care of, but as an adult woman. Piper dismisses Suzanne's advances by saying "I'm sure you'll find one", clearly not interested in developing their relationship any further than what it is and trying to deflect Suzanne's admiration. Suzanne ignores Piper's comment and continues trying to impress Piper by reciting a poem she wrote:

Before I met you, the sun was like a yellow grape  
But now, it look like fire in the sky  
Why? Because you light a fire inside me

Suzanne's recital is accompanied by dramatic hand movements and body language, suggesting that Suzanne has strong physical feelings about Piper, which cannot be expressed solely through words.<sup>24</sup> Piper responds by telling Suzanne that her fiancé, Larry, is a writer, clearly trying again to subtly reject Suzanne's advances. It seems as if Piper, who was shown to have no trouble being rude to other people, feels as though she owes Suzanne for helping her out with her problem and does not want to antagonize her. Suzanne bows her head at the mention of Larry and announces that she's going to call Piper "Dandelion", completely glazing over Piper's subtle rejections. This shows us that Suzanne is not only romantically interested in Piper, she is also somewhat obsessive about her interest. So, while Suzanne implicitly expresses that she dislikes being treated like a child, she does not alter her own behavior towards others in a similar way, to appear less childish. This implies that Suzanne herself is to blame for the way people treat her, since she does not adapt her behavior to other people's comfort.

They are interrupted by a prison guard announcing that the running track will be closed down due to budget cuts, which upsets Piper, who declares that she "has to run, it's the only thing that makes [her] feel normal." Piper's comment about feeling normal is a direct mirror of

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<sup>24</sup> Appendix 3.1 – 3.4.

Suzanne's earlier comment about needing a "grown woman" in that they both feel like they need something, or someone, to make them feel normal during their incarceration. The guard apologizes and tells them to do their "swirl" somewhere else, which prompts Suzanne to sing "Chocolate and vanilla, swiiiiirl, swiiiiirl," while intertwining her fingers with Piper and doing a little dance. Chocolate and vanilla are nicknames she gives herself and Piper respectively, based on their skin colors.

In the last shots, Piper and Suzanne are seen through the wires of the fence, emphasizing their incarceration to the viewer.<sup>25</sup> It's interesting that the only time they have physical contact is shown through these wires, implying that the relationship they share "belongs" behind the fencing and in the prison, and not in default society. Applying the theory of Arthurs, it is clear that the unconventional way in which Suzanne expresses her attraction does not fit into the heteronormative model of relationships, and therefore, it is not accepted in default society. Instead, the wiring in the scene frames the audience as the spectator, but a spectator that is not in jail with Piper and Suzanne. Through this, the concepts of homovoyeurism and the Other are applied in multiple ways; not only are the women both framed as not being a part of default society and thus as Others, but Suzanne's attraction to Piper expressed in an unconventional manner and the object of the audience's gaze (not the Male Gaze, since Suzanne is not sexualized in a traditional way) makes Suzanne into an Other as well.

## **BORA BORA BORA (1x10)**

### **Scene: Cafeteria Conversation**

The episode opens with Piper reaffirming to Nicky and Lorna that "[she is] not gay." Nicky however, seems adamant on the fact that Piper is sleeping with Alex. She and Lorna have been in this situation before and she recognizes the behavior. Her theory is 'proven' when she notes Alex's hair is dry, proving that Alex was lying about having taken a shower before breakfast.

It is unclear whether Piper is refusing to label herself as gay in this particular scene, or whether she is lying to get Nicky off her back. However, her choice of the words "I'm not gay" is particularly interesting, since Piper would usually be described as bisexual, because she has had relationships with people of multiple genders.<sup>26</sup> So, while Piper is saying she's not gay, which in this case would mean "exclusively attracted to women", she is also not denying that she is attracted to women. Later in the episode, a flashback shows Piper once again not clearly labeling her sexuality, but reaffirming that she likes women:

"I like hot girls. And I like hot boys. I like hot people! What can I say? I'm shallow."

What Piper means by her declaration in the cafeteria is unknown and seems to be in conflict with what she tells Polly in the flashback, but Nicky's later comment about *rejoining* the softball league gives us a means to decipher it. Softball is often referred to as a sport for lesbians in pop culture

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<sup>25</sup> Appendix 3.5.

<sup>26</sup> Bisexual is a label that is often used to describe people attracted to men and women. However, the historical definition is "attracted to two or more genders", which is more inclusive of gender non-conforming people. I use the latter definition.

and the lesbian community, because a lot of lesbians play softball in the United States.<sup>27</sup> By using the specific word “rejoining”, Nicky shows that she knows about Alex and Piper’s previous relationship but also that she thinks that Piper stopped being a lesbian after the relationship ended, and that she is now back to being a lesbian.

It is interesting that, during this entire scene, the word bisexual itself is not mentioned once. Instead, it is implied that being a lesbian is something you can stop and get back to, disregarding the emotional importance of lesbian relationships. In this, we recognize some of Doty’s points about lesbian relationships in fiction. While the relationship between Alex and Piper does not remain merely subtext but are portrayed on screen (we will discuss the manner in which this happens later), it is clearly not being considered serious enough by Piper herself to label herself accordingly, since she states that it’s mostly because she misses human contact and that her relationship with Alex is about comfort, which she has been missing since she went to prison. This is an important “misunderstanding”, because it implies that Piper is only a lesbian because she is in prison; she is the audience’s heterosexual proxy in the prison. The scene is amusing to watch, because of Alex and Piper’s failed attempt to keep their sexual relations a secret, but it does not dive into the deeper meaning behind this relationship. The fact that Piper is cheating on her fiancé also contributes to the harmful stereotype that bisexual people are prone to adultery. The cheating makes the audience dislike Piper, but because she is the heterosexual audience’s proxy, she is forgiven quite easily. After all, Piper literally represents the white upper middle class or default society, who ventures into the dangerous world of queer women or the prison.

Speaking of the sex, the way in which the show illustrates that Piper and Alex are in a relationship is relevant as well. The flashback of Piper climaxing and Alex telling her to be quiet is quite erotic. Because Nicky is describing a pattern she’s noticed, we can assume that they have been having sex before breakfast regularly. The flashback is an invitation into Alex and Piper’s sex life, offering the viewer the position of the spectator. This is done through the perspectives used in the short scene, which are both from a third person point of view, creating the illusion to the viewer that they are looking at the two women while standing beside them.<sup>28</sup> Not only does OITNB encourage homovoyeurism in this short moment, it also seems to be sexual mostly for the pleasure or entertainment of the (male) viewer, much like Byerly and Ross, as well as Harvey, describe. The show could’ve gone a different way to show Alex and Piper were together, but they chose to have them have sex while Nicky was looking for them to heighten the comedic value of the scene.

## **A WHOLE OTHER HOLE (2X04)**

### **Scenes: The sex competition**

Boo and Nicky discuss the girls they’ve slept with in a somewhat impersonal manner. Boo calls Nicky a junkie, implying that her sexual partners are equivalent to drugs. They also discuss women in a way that makes them seem like commodities or objects, literally assigning a specific value to them and using the word “marks” to describe them. Boo and Nicky are portrayed as

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<sup>27</sup> Kflick, “Why Do Lesbians Like Softball So Much?” on midleap.com, read December 17, 2018, <http://www.midleap.com/2010/04/lesbianssoftball/>.

<sup>28</sup> Appendix 3.6 and 3.7.

predatory lesbians, who don't care about the feelings of their subjects. They fit the description of the "dominant lesbian" stereotype Ciasullo describes, intimidating other inmates. Boo even offers to "trade" Piper's blanket for a chance to have sex with Brook Soso after invading the latter's personal space and being ignored. Piper complies and tells Brook she needs a "prison girlfriend" during a conversation in the cafeteria, and uses the words "man-ish", "kind of bulky" and "inspires real fear" in an attempt to get Brook interested in Boo. The words she uses are quite literally descriptions of Boo, since Piper is looking at Boo while talking to Brook, but they are also descriptions of the dominant lesbian stereotype: masculine and scary. Piper almost scares Brook into sleeping with Boo, telling her that prison is really scary, and that she needs protection in order not to get raped and/or murdered. When Brook shows disinterest in having a relationship or sex with Boo, Boo blames Piper. The words "you didn't deliver" once again insinuate that Boo believes she's talking about a product instead of a person. Through these interactions, Boo is portrayed as aggressive and predatory, seemingly not at all interested in other people's feelings. This is further emphasized when she laughs at Piper and calls her a horrible person, even though she herself proposed "exchanging" Brook for the blanket. Piper, the audience's proxy, is framed as the victim here, and Boo is the aggressor or even the villain.

Subsequently, Nicky having sex with Brook in the chapel also sends a clear message. Nicky has similar intentions as Boo did when approaching Brook in her bunk when she feels sad about being treated badly by Piper and Boo; she wants to sleep with Brook in order to gain an edge over Boo in the competition. Brook is known for her tendency to talk non-stop, so Nicky's proposal to "talk about it" is very clearly a ruse and emotional manipulation to get Brook to sleep with her. When they have sex in the chapel, Brook does not stop talking and Nicky is clearly annoyed by it, eventually forcing Brook's face into her own crotch to make her stop talking.<sup>29</sup> During the sex scene, the perspective shifts between shots from behind Nicky focused on Brook, shots from Brook's waist-height, focused on Nicky's head and sometimes face, when she lifts her head, and shots from a third perspective, showing both women from the side (screenshot reference). These shots all establish the viewer as the spectator, and as Ciasullo describes, Nicky, the aggressor and also masculine lesbian, is fully dressed and somewhat desexualized. Brook is shown fully naked, sweaty and out of breath, clearly in a more vulnerable position than Nicky, as she is shown from a frontal perspective. Coincidentally, Brook has been portrayed as a 'victim' in earlier scenes, framing this scene as Brook falling prey to the dangerous lesbian predator. Nicky's aggression is a clear way to establish her as being no better than Boo; they are both sexual predators who don't value Brook as a person, and Brook is merely a passive object. Through this, the scene attempts to position both Nicky and Boo as the "spectators" in a Male Gaze-situation, except that neither of them is male.

The sex scene itself is very graphic, clearly showing Nicky as being the dominant half in the situation. It does not seem like she is enjoying herself while having sex with Brook until she

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<sup>29</sup> The chapel, which serves as a ceremonial space for all religions, is frequently used as a location for sexual encounters in the show, often by Nicky herself. Nicky is Jewish, but her faith is attached to childhood neglect and abuse by her parents, perhaps explaining her disregard for the space. Alex and Piper are also shown to have sex in the chapel. Unfortunately, lesbians' disregard for sacred spaces is not the focus of my thesis, but I would like to note that further investigation into this topic would certainly be fruitful.

switches their positions and makes Brook perform oral sex on her.<sup>30</sup> This implicates even more that Nicky does not care about Brook or her sexual satisfaction, since she never orgasms, but only cares about herself. Her selfishness and lack of interest in Brook are further emphasized at the end of episode 2x04 – A WHOLE OTHER HOLE when during the movie, she is annoyed by Brook’s commentary, but grabs her breast to show off her “prize” to Boo anyway.

So, Boo and Nicky are both portrayed as the villains in these scenes. Boo because she forces Piper, the audience’s proxy, to scare Brook into sleeping with her (something she herself failed to accomplish in an earlier episode), and Nicky because she uses emotional manipulation to get Brook to sleep with her. Both Boo and Nicky have masculine tendencies, and we can assume that this is precisely why they are being painted as the aggressors. They are also portrayed in contrast to Piper and Brook, who represent feminine women and the audience, as Others. What adds to this is that Piper and Brook are both well-educated and likely middle to upper class, much like the target audience for OITNB.<sup>31</sup>

## **You Also Have A Pizza (2x06)**

### **Scenes: Poussey’s flashback**

A flashback shows Poussey prior to her incarceration, having sex with a German girl named Franziska in a dimly lit room. The women are both fully naked, and are initially shown in a close embrace, with their legs intertwined, looking to be “scissoring,” a lesbian sex position that is believed to be more commonly practiced than it actually is. Poussey gets a leg cramp, temporarily interrupting the sensual atmosphere of the scene, but it is quickly recovered when she lifts Franziska up and finds a different angle. The camera pans up and down their bodies, showing their naked breasts but not their faces from a third person perspective.<sup>32</sup> When the angle changes, it shows Franziska, who seems to be enjoying the position for a short time, before giving up. Poussey tells the other girl, in German, “I told you scissoring wasn’t a thing,” commenting on a common ‘inside joke’ within the lesbian community, which is that scissoring does not actually happen in real life, but only in lesbian porn (which is made for men and heavily incorporates the Male Gaze) because it looks good on camera but does not feel good for the people involved and is actually quite physically straining.

After the failed attempt at scissoring, the two women lie down on the bed together in a spooning position. Poussey’s breast is still exposed, but the focus of the shot is on her face.<sup>33</sup> She talks about a saying she knows about love in German, “Love is not two people looking at each other, it is two people looking in the same direction.” Franziska declares that she doesn’t like this saying, because she likes looking at Poussey too much, before announcing that she is thirsty. The atmosphere of the scene changes back from soft romantic to erotic when Poussey pours water into her mouth from a glass, but spills some of it down the front of her body. She then follows the trail

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<sup>30</sup> Appendix 3.8.

<sup>31</sup> I focus on Brook’s femininity in contrast to Boo’s and Nicky’s aggressive masculinity. However, Brook is Asian, her being framed a passive object also has some serious racial implications. Since this is not the topic of this research, I do not comment on this in text, but implore others to perform more extensive research on the racial representations in OITNB.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix 3.9.

<sup>33</sup> Appendix 3.10.

of water with her mouth, eventually ending up performing oral sex on Franziska. The camera is behind Poussey's head and focuses on Franziska's face, putting the viewer in Poussey's position.<sup>34</sup>

There is a clear difference between the voyeuristic third-person perspective in which the scissoring scene is shown and this perspective. The comment about scissoring not being real is almost a fourth-wall break in this way, as lesbian porn which includes scissoring is often shot from and for the Male Gaze, with (homo)voyeuristic purposes. Because their scissoring is also filmed from this perspective, the show shortly mirrors this voyeuristic aspect, but shortly after, breaks the illusion that lesbian porn is in any way realistic. However, it does so in a subtle way which most (male) viewers won't pick up on, because they are not aware of the 'inside joke' around scissoring in the lesbian community. This, combined with the change in perspective when Poussey performs an actually common lesbian sex act, putting the viewer in Poussey's place (a place many lesbians will probably recognize), gives off the impression that this scene was not created for homovoyeuristic purposes or to entertain male viewers but rather, as actual lesbian representation. This scene contradicts what Ciasullo says about attractive lesbians being desexualized and not shown to have sex with women, as well as lesbian sex often looking like it is for the benefit of the male viewer. It toys with the trope of homovoyeurism by actively discrediting its own portrayal of lesbian sex and simultaneously shows two women in what looks to be a happy relationship together, talking about love.

However, the two women are rudely interrupted by Franziska's father, who looks on in shock as he catches them in bed together. The interruption frames the sex in a very specific way: it's supposed to be a secret and it's happening in a confined and private space, not the outer world. This is a common theme throughout the show, also seen in the scene between Piper and Suzanne in season one. The perspective in this scene starts out from Poussey's point of view, looking at the man past Franziska, but shifts to the father's point of view, looking down onto Poussey, who is in a vulnerable position. Here, the position of the audience as spectator is reinstated, after shortly being placed in a position of participant. However, it is important to note that in the last shot, there is no trace of the Male Gaze, since the spectator in this case is looking at his daughter.

## **FINGER IN THE DYKE (3X04)**

### **Scene: Boo's flashback of leaving the bar**

When Boo leaves the bar, she is accompanied by Tracy, the much more feminine girl she just met inside and seduced. The audience looks at them from a distance, showing their surroundings.<sup>35</sup> It positions the viewer as a bystander in the same street, giving us the feeling of being out in the open and exposed. Boo and Tracy are walking closely together and slowly, the camera zooms in on their upper bodies while Boo backs Tracy into a telephone post to kiss her. With this action, Boo is established to be the dominant lesbian Ciasullo mentions. When they kiss, the viewer looks at them from the side in a medium shot but during the continuation of the kiss, the camera moves in closer. It is at its closest point when Boo asks Tracy to come back to her place to "have another

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<sup>34</sup> Appendix 3.11.

<sup>35</sup> Appendix 3.12

drink."<sup>36</sup> The tone in which she says so heavily implies that Boo means she wants to have sex with Tracy. Tracy seems to contemplate for a short while but agrees to go with Boo.

However, when they resume walking towards Boo's house, they encounter a young man who yells "fucking dykes" at them. This triggers an immediate and violent response from Boo, who curses at the boy, grabs his shirt and pushes him into a garbage can. She threatens him multiple times while the viewer looks on over the man's shoulder, watching Boo's face twist up in anger. Shots of Boo yelling at the boy (and the viewer) are alternated with shots of Tracy looking horrified and shots over Boo's shoulder, presumably from Tracy's perspective.<sup>37</sup> These perspectives alternate until Boo pushes the boy away and tells him to "get the fuck out of here" and to "run, you homophobic little bitch." When the boy runs away, the camera immediately snaps into Tracy's perspective, looking at the boy past Boo's back. The viewer is first confronted with Boo's anger by being put in the position of the victim, and then being put in the position of the 'other victim', which is Tracy. I use quotation marks, because the feminine Tracy is framed as the victim of aggressive and predatory "dominant" lesbian Boo, as evidenced by her backing Tracy into the phone pole. There's a parallel between Boo guiding Tracy into that position and Boo pushing the boy into the garbage can; she corners both of them, not offering an escape until it's on her terms (Tracy agrees to have sex with her, and the boy is scared and runs away).

When the boy is gone, Tracy announces, shocked, that she's decided to go home. Boo tells her not to let him ruin their night, to which Tracy responds: "You ruined our night." Boo seems offended and confused by this, not understanding that her anger and aggression scared Tracy, and Tracy clarifies that "[she] can't blame a stupid kid for being ignorant, when [she's] the poster child for all things butch." Clearly, Tracy feels as though Boo should not be upset about people being homophobic towards her, because she makes it "too easy" by being a stereotype. This narrative is very harmful and can be categorized as 'victim blaming', since the way Boo dresses is used as an excuse for the homophobic harassment of the man.<sup>38</sup> Commonly, attractive women are blamed for being harassed more than unattractive women, with the reason that they are "looking for male attention" with the way they dress.<sup>39</sup> This is not exactly what happened with Boo; the way she dresses is very masculine and would most likely not be deemed attractive by many men. However, the traditional format of victim blaming is reversed here; Boo is too masculine, and thus deemed threatening by men, and therefore she deserves to be harassed. Instead of 'positive' attention from men for being attractive, the attention she receives is negative, because she does not fit into society's standards for women.<sup>40</sup>

Instead of making the audience sympathize with Boo after getting called a homophobic slur, the narrative flips and tries to make the viewer feel sorry for Tracy. This already happens earlier in the scene when we see Boo close Tracy in against the telephone pole, but the second

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<sup>36</sup> Appendix 3.13 and 3.14

<sup>37</sup> Appendix 3.15 – 3.17.

<sup>38</sup> Victim blaming is a name for when it is believed that the victim of harassment, usually sexual in nature, is to blame for causing the harassment by dressing or acting in a certain way.

<sup>39</sup> Kimberly Fairchild, "But Look At What She Was Wearing! Victim Blaming and Street Harassment," in *Gender, Sex and Politics: In the Streets and Between the Sheets in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 24-25.

<sup>40</sup> I do not believe that sexual harassment is in any way positive attention, but oftentimes, the perpetrators do think that.

time, it's much more explicit. Boo calls her a cunt, and Tracy asks, "what happened to you that made you so angry?" Boo replies that she's "just a big old dyke who refuses to apologize for it," and calls Tracy a "prissy, homophobic, self-hating bitch." Tracy is once again portrayed as the victim of Boo's abusive words, even though the real harm is done when Tracy blames Boo for being harassed. After Tracy leaves, Boo leans against the wall, cursing but not necessarily sad, rather frustrated that her 'score' had left. All of this together forms an extremely harmful narrative around Boo's sexuality, which is that it deserves to be ridiculed and that her anger about it is unjustified, implying that Boo's aggression, not just about this but in general, is unnecessary and tied to her lesbian identity. The stereotype of 'dominant angry lesbian' is not new to me or to lesbian representation, but the way OITNB portrays it adds a new level of toxicity by saying that Boo herself is the cause of the hate that she's subjected to and that she therefore deserves no sympathy.

# Conclusion

The contrast between how masculine and feminine queer women are treated in the narrative OITNB is shocking. Boo, Nicky, Poussey and Suzanne (who is not necessarily masculine or feminine herself but is portrayed as masculine because of her aggression towards Piper) are completely denied of sympathy, while their more feminine counterparts, for example, Piper, Brook and Tracy, are the ones that get our sympathy for being subjected to the aggression of the dominant lesbians. However, all lesbian characters are punished for their lesbianism.

Boo, Nicky and Suzanne face serious repercussions for the expression of their sexualities and their aggression. Boo is penalized for looking too butch and being threatening to men, Nicky is a drug addict (negative representation in itself) and gets sent to the Maximum-Security part of the prison after her affair with Brook, Suzanne is mentally unstable and has several nervous breakdowns. Even Poussey, who has the 'best' representation out of the analyzed scenes, ends up having to move countries after her girlfriend's father transfers her father overseas to break up the two girls (not to mention, Poussey dies at the end of season 4, right when she is in a happy and fulfilling relationship with Brook Soso). Brook ends up feeling horrible and even gets depressed after being used by Boo and Nicky, eventually indirectly causing Nicky to be sent to Max. Her eventual (first lesbian) relationship with Poussey is also penalized by Poussey's death, leaving Brook traumatized and in a state of complete devastation. Tracy leaves after a bad ending to her night, scared away by the dominant lesbian, and Piper is betrayed by Alex in court. All these consequences, directly or indirectly tied to expressions of queer sexuality by the characters, send a message about same-sex attraction; that it is something to be penalized, and that the characters deserve the negative consequences they encounter. This answers the first sub-question; "How are queer women treated within the narrative?"

Of course, none of this is taking place in a vacuum. Boo and Poussey's consequences aren't just the things that happen directly afterwards, but their incarcerations are also punishment for their lesbian sexual activity in the flashbacks, which take place outside of prison. Suzanne is mentally unwell, and the track scene makes the audience believe that she belongs in prison because of the sexually aggressive way she approaches Piper. Coincidentally, during all of the scenes that take place inside the prison, the viewer is put into a third-person perspective, looking at what happens as a spectator. The only scenes in which this doesn't happen are the flashback scenes, when Poussey has sex with her girlfriend and when Boo is threatening the homophobic man, which both take place outside the prison and end poorly for the characters. So, while the flashbacks taking place outside the prison teach the viewer the negative consequences of being queer in 'normal' society as a participant by using point-of-view perspectives, the scenes inside the prison offer a view into the lives of queer women, not as a participant but as a spectator, by using the third person perspective. The use of barriers, for example, between the camera and Suzanne and Piper, further emphasizes the foreignness and Otherness of these relationships. With this, I answer the second sub-question: "How is queer female sexuality framed in OITNB?"

I conclude that, while Piper may have been introduced as straight and function as a proxy character, the entire prison is actually a proxy environment, separate from 'normal' society. While the expression of queer sexuality is allowed and somewhat natural in this proxy space (purely

based on the sheer number of scenes I could have analyzed) it is nonetheless still punished. The barrier that Manuel discusses, between the gay and the straight world, is transformed into a literal barrier in OITNB. The gay world is inside of the prison, while the straight world is the world the viewer walks around in. The use of the Male Gaze and homovoyeurism in the cinematography of scenes adds to this experience.

Another thing that adds to the barrier is related to Arthur's point about LGBT people having to fit in to be considered "acceptable". These women don't fit into society, because they are all criminals. OITNB enforces this further by not having them be part of 'normal' society. They are a part of a different society, one that happens mostly behind closed doors (Poussey, Piper and Alex) and at night and in bars (Boo) or behind a fence (Suzanne, Boo, Nicky). The meaning that is encoded here comes down to the fact that queer sexuality and queer people don't belong in society. These characters have depth, and they're not perfect citizens, so they don't fit into the 'normal' world outside the prison, but they don't have to be perfect to fit into their own society.

Altogether, the representation in OITNB seems diverse at first sight, however, this research has shown that there is an implicit narrative present, which tells the audience that queer women, especially masculine queer women, do not belong in society, and that expression of queer sexual identity should be punished. The audience is not meant to show sympathy for these Others, they are merely meant to observe them from their homovoyeuristic position outside the prison. As a member of the audience who identifies with at least some of these characters, this is a particularly painful conclusion to come to.

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# Appendix

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## **1. Character introductions**

### **Piper Chapman**

At the beginning of the series, Piper receives a letter stating that she has been convicted for a crime and has to go to prison, shortly after her fiancé Larry Bloom proposed. The crime she's been charged with is smuggling drugs for her ex-girlfriend, Alex Vause, when she was in her early twenties. In prison, Piper encounters Alex and blames her for the incarceration, but forgives her when she learns it took years off Alex's sentence. The two begin an affair, and eventually Piper breaks up with Larry, which ends when they are called as witnesses in a case against Alex's old boss. Alex persuades Piper not to testify, even though it would grant her an immediate release from prison, warning Piper that her old boss would have her killed. Piper chooses not to speak the entire truth in court, but Alex does, and is released from jail. Piper feels as though Alex has betrayed her. Eventually, Alex is sent back to prison for violating her parole with possession of a firearm and they are reunited, resuming their affair in a violent manner. They are on-again-off-again during seasons 3 and 4. Piper proposes during the prison riot that takes place in season 5, and they are unofficially married in season 6, right before Piper gets an early release. Piper is headstrong and stubborn, frequently meddling in things unrelated to herself and getting stuck in problematic situations.

### **Alex Vause**

Alex is a convicted drug dealer. She named Piper during her trial to lessen her sentence, but still gets a lot of years in prison. After betraying her old boss in court, she spends her short time out of prison afraid that he is going to send someone to kill her. When someone knocks on her door and she answers with the gun in her hand, it turns out to be her parole officer, and she is sent back to prison, where she continues to fear for her life. It turns out she was right to do so, because she is almost killed by a man pretending to be a guard. However, she is saved by a fellow inmate, and ends up killing the man and burying him in the prison garden. She does not tell anyone about this. Later, a fellow inmate is wrongfully convicted for the murder and sentenced to life in the Psychiatric Ward of the prison. Alex feels guilty about this for a short while, but quickly gets over it. She resumes her relationship with Piper after some time, and at the end of season 5 she says yes when Piper proposes during the prison riot. Alex is self-centered and quiet, mostly trying to stay away from prison drama, but often getting pulled into it by Piper.

### **Nicky Nichols**

Nicky is a lesbian inmate who has been sentenced to 5 years in prison because of heroin possession with intent to distribute. She is a drug addict and thus knowledgeable in the area of pharmaceuticals. At the beginning of season 1, Nicky is in a casual relationship with Lorna Morello, an Italian inmate with mental health issues, but Lorna ends this relationship quite early in the series because she feels as though she is cheating on her fiancé (who doesn't exist). Nicky is very angry about this initially, frequently saying that it's just because of the sex. She proceeds to have sex with other inmates, leading up to the competition with Boo in season 2, which is included in the analysis. Nicky is shown to relapse multiple times over the course of the six seasons. She mostly hangs out with Red's group in the prison. Red is a Russian middle-aged woman who has

been in prison for a long time. Nicky considers her a mother and they even refer to each other as mom and daughter. Nicky prefers to avoid direct confrontation and seems like a pacifist, usually acting as the peacekeeping party in violent situations. However, she is also very competitive.

### **Carrie "Big Boo" Black**

Boo is a masculine lesbian with lots of tattoos and a short undercut hairstyle. She deals with anger issues and has a therapy dog she refers to as "Little Boo". The reason for her incarceration is unknown in the show, however, she is seen taking bets in flashbacks and refers to herself as a "thieving dyke", implying it was related to money. At the beginning of OITNB, Boo is a part of Red's family, like Nicky, but she ends up betraying Red for Vee, the matriarch of the black inmates, in season 2, after which Vee tells her she has no use for a snitch and refuses to become allies with Boo. Boo is then shown to befriend Pennsatucky, a religious inmate who gives Boo the idea to pretend to be a reformed homosexual to get money from a church. In this context, Boo's flashbacks, including the one used for analysis, are shown. Boo is portrayed as untrustworthy towards authority figures, refusing to let other people tell her what to do, but is also a loyal friend to Pennsatucky. Her behavior towards other women is aggressive and dominant.

### **Suzanne "Crazy Eyes" Warren**

Suzanne is introduced as an inmate who has a crush on Piper. She's black with short hair, which she wears tied up in bantu knots during the first season. Suzanne suffers from an unknown mental illness (viewers with an affinity for psychology have suggested schizophrenia as a possible diagnosis) and takes medication (presumably antipsychotics) for this reason. She is very impressionable, quickly taking a liking for people who stand up for her and are nice to her. It is possible that this results from trauma she endured as being an adopted older sibling in a white family. Suzanne is caring towards others, but experiences bouts of extreme anger and violent behavior. She visits the psychiatric ward every now and then, being named as the only inmate who has ever come back out of it. Suzanne was originally convicted for (accidentally) killing a young boy she was babysitting when he fell out of a window. Her family visits often and treats her like a young child.

### **Poussey Washington**

Poussey is a humorous and joyful young inmate. She is frequently seen with Tasha Jefferson and belongs to the "Black" prison family. She makes her own "hooch" in the toilet and often demonstrates her creativity. Before getting caught in possession of marijuana with intent to sell, she was supposed to become a Cadet at West Point, a military academy, and follow in her father's footsteps. Her father was stationed in Germany when Poussey started a relationship with the daughter of his commanding officer, Franziska. The commanding officer sends Poussey's father back to the US afterwards, where Poussey ends up in prison. At the end of season 4, Poussey dies by accident at the hands of a new and inexperienced correctional officer. Her death inspires a prison riot that spans across season 5 and of which the consequences are seen in season 6. She is still frequently mentioned by main characters as having had a positive impact on their lives.



## 2. Transcriptions of analyzed scenes

### Episode 1x03 – LESBIAN REQUEST DENIED

	<i>[Outside the prison, Piper is running laps on a field of grass with a ring of dirt where the grass has been worn down from people running and walking on it.]</i>
Piper Chapman	<i>[Catching her breath after jogging]</i>
Suzanne Warren	Hello, baby. Look at you getting your sweat on. You look all shiny. I bet you... you don't even smell funky.
Suzanne Warren	<i>[Sniffs and chuckles]</i> Ha, I knew you wouldn't.
Suzanne Warren	You a real woman, Chapman. A real grown woman. And not like all these other girls around here. I can't waste my time with these silly bitches. I need a real woman.
Piper Chapman	I'm sure that you'll find one.
Suzanne Warren	I wrote a poem, you wanna hear?
Piper Chapman	You know, that's fine--
Suzanne Warren <i>[with dramatic movements]</i>	"Before I met you the sun was like a yellow grape. But now, it look like fire in the sky. Why? Because you light a fire inside me".
Piper Chapman	Wow...
Suzanne Warren	I wrote it for you.
Piper Chapman	You know, my fiancé is a writer.
Suzanne Warren	<i>[Pauses for a short while]</i> I'm gonna call you Dandelion. 'Cause they're pretty, and yellow, just like you.
Guard	Everybody out! Let's go!
Piper Chapman	Oh! Thank you.
Piper Chapman	What's going on?
Guard	Locking up the track.
Piper Chapman	Why?
Guard	Budget cuts. No staff to cover it.
Piper Chapman <i>[stammering]</i>	But I have to run. This is the only thing that makes me feel normal.
Guard	Y'all gonna have to do your swirl someplace else.
Piper	Swirl?
Suzanne Warren <i>[singing]</i>	Chocolate and vanilla. Swir-irl. Swir-irl.

**Episode 1x10 – BORA BORA BORA**

52:56 - 51:38

	<i>[Piper Chapman, Nicky Nichols and Lorna Morello are sitting at a table together in the prison cafeteria.]</i>
Piper Chapman	I'm not gay.
Nicky Nichols	All right, I'm just saying, I've noticed a pattern developing around breakfast time. See, you come in late, just before Vause. Strategically staggered arrival?
Lorna Morello <i>[in a suggestive tone of voice]</i>	Sounds familiar.
Piper Chapman	No, absolutely not. That's ridiculous.
Nicky Nichols	Okay, where were you then? 'Cause I went by your cube...
Piper Chapman	Where was I?
Piper Chapman <i>[in flashback]</i>	I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming.
Alex Vause <i>[in flashback, with her head between Piper's legs]</i>	Show, don't tell.
Piper Chapman	So, yes, Alex and I have been spending a lot of time together but it's not like I'm-
Nicky Nichols	What, rejoining the softball league?
Piper Chapman	No, softball is the furthest thing from my mind.
Nicky Nichols	Oh, no, let me be clear. By softball, I meant two in her front and then one in the butt, and then just eating her pussy a lot, 'cause you like it so much- <i>[Nicky acts out the motions in an explicit manner]</i>
Piper Chapman	Let me explain something to you-
Nicky Nichols	-and playing with her titties.
Piper Chapman <i>[calmly explaining]</i>	Alex and I are very old friends. We have an affectionate relationship. I need that. I'm human. It's about comfort, right?
Nicky Nichols	Hey, Morello, remember when we used to comfort each other?
Lorna Morello <i>[in a suggestive tone of voice]</i>	Sure. You were very comfortable.
	<i>[Alex Vause enters the scene, sitting down at the table]</i>

Alex Vause	Hey, guys. Just barely made breakfast.
Nicky Nichols	Long shower line?
Alex Vause	Yeah, it was really awful today.
Nicky Nichols	Your hair's dry.
	<i>[Nicky walks off first, grinning at Alex and Piper. Lorna follows her, also smiling. Alex and Piper look at each other. The scene cuts to black.]</i>

### Episode 2x04 – A WHOLE OTHER HOLE

13:25 – 10:32

	<i>[Piper Chapman is sitting at a cafeteria table, talking to Yoga Jones and Sister Ingrass about female genitalia, a hot current topic in the prison. They spot Brook, and Yoga Jones points her out to Piper. They discuss how Piper was much like Brook when she first arrived in the prison. Piper, who has previously made a deal with Big Boo to put in a good word for her in exchange for her blanket back, spots an opportunity.]</i>
Piper Chapman	<i>[waving]</i> Brook! Right here!
Yoga Jones	Please don't do that, she's a gabber.
Sister Ingrass	Shall we adjourn?
Yoga Jones	I think that's wise.
Brook Soso	Oh my god, I am so relieved. I thought you were mad at me. You're totally not mad at me, right?
Piper Chapman	No, of course I'm not mad at you.
Brook Soso	<i>[relieved sigh]</i> Thank god. Everyone in here is in such a bad mood all the time. I mean, like, I always thought women's prison would be more about community and girl power and stuff. But some of these women just seem crazy.
Piper Chapman	It can be a lot worse than that, Brook. It can be seriously dangerous in here. Don't kid yourself.
Brook Soso	What do you mean?
Piper Chapman	You're a pretty girl. And you're gonna be a target. I know that I was.
Brook Soso	You mean like rape?
Piper Chapman	Oh, rape, assault, battery. You need to find yourself a prison wife. Somebody really tough. Somebody nobody's gonna fuck with.
Brook Soso	Did you do that?

Piper Chapman	All I'm saying is that one night with the right protector can keep you safe for the rest of your sentence.
Brook Soso <i>[in an accusatory tone of voice]</i>	You mean you.
Piper Chapman	No. See, I'm not tough. What you need is somebody who inspires real fear. You know, somebody who's kind of man-ish and kind of bulky, but tender at heart. And there's not a lot of good ones. Most of them are taken.
	<i>[Carrie "Big Boo" Black walks up to their table]</i>
Big Boo	<i>[Clears throat]</i> Hey, you two. What are we talking about here? Well, you know, I am feeling so single today.
Brook Soso	What's going on?
Piper Chapman	Nothing. Big Boo, this is Brook. And, Brook, this is Big Boo.
Brook Soso	<i>[Looking back and forth between Boo and Piper]</i> Uh... Is this some kind of game? I don't get it. What is going on?
Big Boo	<i>[Looking at Piper]</i> Could you suck any more at this?
Piper Chapman <i>[in an incredulous tone of voice]</i>	I suck at this? I mean, look at your ridiculous timing. Clearly this is not working, so can I just have my blanket back?
Big Boo	No. You didn't deliver.
Brook Soso	Deliver what? Me?
Piper Chapman	I did my part.
Big Boo	<i>[Scoffs]</i>
Brook Soso	Were you trying to pimp me out?
Piper Chapman	She took my blanket. It belonged to my roommate, it meant a lot to me. Plus, it is very fucking cold in the dormitories.
Brook Soso	You tried to sell me for a blanket?
Piper Chapman	Well, when you put it that way...
Brook Soso	You are sick, you know that? You are seriously fucked up.
	<i>[Brook leaves]</i>
Big Boo	You know, she's right, Chapman. <i>[Chuckles]</i> . You're a horrible person.
	<i>[Boo walks away, still chuckling to herself. Piper looks kind of sad.]</i>

10:32 – 09:06

	<i>[After the confrontation in the cafeteria, Brook runs to her bunk, crying.]</i>
Brook Soso	<i>[breathing heavily]</i> <i>[sighs]</i>
	<i>[Nicky Nichols walks up to the separation between the bunk and the "hallway" and leans on it.]</i>

Nicky Nichols	Hey, hey, what's the matter?
Brook Soso	<i>[sniffles]</i>
Nicky Nichols	You wanna talk about it?
Brook Soso	<i>[Slowly turns around and raises her head to look at Nicky.]</i>
	<i>[FAST FORWARD]</i>
	<i>[Brook is behind the altar in the prison chapel. Nicky is performing oral sex on her.]</i>
Brook Soso <i>[moaning]</i>	Oh, my god! Oh, wow!
Brook Soso <i>[trying to catch her breath]</i>	You know, I've only ever done this with one other girl before. I think it was at Bonnaroo, and I made out with the chick who painted my breasts. <i>[Breathes heavily]</i> We were both wearing these, like big headdresses and, like, The String Cheese Incident was playing, and we got up on stage and we just started dancing.
Nicky Nichols <i>[muffled]</i>	Uhu.
Brook Soso	Brook: You know, when I think back on it, I think I probably ended up getting heat stroke 'cause the tent was like a thousand degrees.
Brook Soso	Brook: Oh! <i>[moans]</i> . That feels good <i>[chuckles]</i> . Do you ever feel like you're in your body, but you can really feel, like, the space around you, like air suddenly becomes, like, really heavy, and you can feel like, the atmosphere and the molecules just hanging around your head? And then, you feel this tingling--
	<i>[Nicky gets up from between Brook's legs, towering over her. She quickly drags her underwear down her legs and aggressively shoves Brook's face into her crotch.]</i>
Nicky Nichols	There we go.
Brook Soso <i>[grunting]</i>	Hmm.
Nicky Nichols <i>[quietly]</i>	Fucking String Cheese <i>[grunts]</i> .

#### Episode 2x06 – You ALSO HAVE A PIZZA

	<i>[Poussey and her girlfriend, Franziska, are 'scissoring' in Franziska's bedroom.]</i>
Poussey Washington <i>[speaking German]</i>	Anything?
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	Higher maybe?
Poussey Washington <i>[speaking German]</i>	Wait. Leg cramp.

Franziska Mertensacker	Sorry.
	<i>[After Poussey's cramp passes, they shift positions.]</i>
Franziska Mertensacker	Okay.
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	That's nice
Poussey Washington	<i>[Looks up at Franziska.]</i> Yeah? Yeah?
Franziska Mertensacker	Yeah.
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	<i>[Sighs disappointedly.]</i> No. It's gone.
Poussey Washington: <i>[speaking German]</i>	I told you scissoring wasn't a thing.
	<i>[Both of them laugh. They shift until they are spooning on the bed, Franziska holding Poussey.]</i>
Poussey Washington <i>[speaking German]</i>	There's a saying about love.
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	There's a million sayings about love
Poussey Washington <i>[speaking German]</i>	I'm thinking of the one that says, "Love is not about staring at each other, but staring off in the same direction".
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	I don't like that one. I love staring at you too much.
	<i>[They kiss softly.]</i>
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	I'm thirsty.
Poussey Washington	<i>[Blows raspberry]</i>
	<i>[Both chuckling]</i>
	<i>[Poussey pours water in Franziska's mouth. Some of the water spills and drips on Franziska's chest.]</i>
Poussey Washington <i>[speaking German]</i>	Lemme get that
	<i>[Poussey licks up the water and goes on to perform oral sex]</i>
Franziska Mertensacker	Oh, yeah <i>[moans]</i> .
Franziska Mertensacker <i>[speaking German]</i>	More.
	<i>[The door opens, revealing a bald man in an army uniform. He does not speak but looks at the two women in bed in shock.]</i>
Poussey Washington	What the fuck?
	<i>[Franziska covers her chest and looks down in shame. Poussey is on her stomach, trying to escape the man's gaze.]</i>

**Episode 3x04 – FINGER IN THE DYKE**

41:38 – 39:55

	<i>[Big Boo and a girl she just met inside stumble out of a bar together and start walking down the street. They are holding hands and walking close to each other.]</i>
Big Boo <i>[laughing]</i>	I'm having such a good time with you.
Tracy	No, it's-- It's okay, isn't it? <i>[laughs]</i>
Big Boo	<i>[Backing Tracy into a telephone post and closing her in with her arms]</i> Oh, oh <i>[gasps]</i> . Look where you are.
	<i>[They kiss against the telephone post.]</i>
Big Boo <i>[in a suggestive tone of voice]</i>	I live really close to here. Do you wanna go there and... Have another drink?
Tracy	<i>[nods]</i> Yeah, let's do that.
Big Boo	<i>[chuckles]</i> Let's do that.
Tracy	Okay.
Big Boo	Yeah.
Man <i>[in an angry and derogatory tone of voice]</i>	Fucking dykes.
Big Boo <i>[shouting loudly, getting progressively angrier with the man]</i>	<i>[pushes him]</i> Are you fucking kidding me? You think you're a tough guy, you cocktail wiener?
	<i>[Boo grabs the man's collar and pushes him back into a garbage can.]</i>
Big Boo <i>[still shouting]</i>	Answer me, you fuckwad! I should fucking kill you, you fucking asshole! I'll stuff your little cock down your throat!
	<i>[Boo shoves the man away. He quickly runs away from them.]</i>
Big Boo	Get out of here! Get the fuck out of here! That's right. Run, you homophobic little bitch!
Tracy	Tracy: Um... I'm going home.
Big Boo <i>[back to being completely calm]</i>	What? Don't let that little shit ruin our night.
Tracy <i>[in an accusatory tone of voice]</i>	You ruined our night.
Big Boo <i>[in disbelief]</i>	Seriously?

Tracy <i>[in the same accusatory tone of voice]</i>	You can't blame a stupid kid when you're the poster child for all things butch!
Big Boo <i>[sounding disappointed]</i>	You were so hot before you were a cunt.
Tracy <i>[in the same accusatory tone of voice]</i>	What the fuck happened to you to make you so angry?
Big Boo <i>[in a really sarcastic tone of voice]</i>	Oh, I wish I had some sob story that would explain everything. Well, sorry to disappoint you, sugar. Ain't no dramatic origin story here. Just a big old dyke who refuses to apologize for it. You know, c'est moi... You prissy, homophobic, self-hating bitch.
Tracy <i>[also sarcastic]</i>	It was really great meeting you.
	<i>[Tracy walks away.]</i>
	<i>[Boo rolls her eyes and leans her head against a wall.]</i>
Big Boo	<i>[Groans].</i> Fuck.

### 3. Screenshots used for analysis

#### 1. Suzanne's poem



#### 2. Suzanne's poem



3. Suzanne's poem



4. Suzanne's poem



5. Chocolate and Vanilla Swirl



6. Piper and Alex



7. Piper and Alex



8. Nicky and Soso in the chapel



9. Poussey and her girlfriend, "scissoring"



10. Poussey and her girlfriend, cuddling



11. Poussey performing oral sex on her girlfriend



12. Boo and Tracy leaving the bar



13. Boo and Tracy at the telephone post, kissing



14. Boo and Tracy at the telephone post after zoom in



15. Tracy looking horrified while Boo threatens the boy



16. Boo threatening the boy, with Tracy looking horrified in the background



17. The boy being threatened by Boo



## *Verklaring Intellectueel Eigendom*

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Handtekening:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'N' and 'L' followed by a horizontal line.